

Dear Council Members,

As we start the New Year with a new Council, I am writing the Council to ask that the Council and the Budget Committee make a promise to the citizens of Sebastopol to act with utmost due diligence and responsibility when addressing the 2023-2024 budget.

As a Council Member, your fiduciary duty is to fund vital City Services and infrastructure, which serve all constituents and support our local business owners, who provide a majority of our tax revenue.

These services include City Staffing, Fire Service, Police Department, Water Systems, Roads, Public Spaces and Public Parks. It is Council's role to make sure these departments are funded before funding any niche populations and services which only apply to an extremely limited number of people.

As Council almost unanimously voted in favor of funding the homeless outreach coordinator without even looking at the budget for next year, I would ask that Council be more prudent and at the bare minimum, have the person in that position detail what work they are doing, how many people it benefits, how they work with the police, how many calls are diverted away from the Police Department. In effect, what is the benefit to the citizens of Sebastopol to have a dedicated homeless outreach coordinator.

I saw this job posting for the position on Indeed for a homeless outreach coordinator in Sebastopol.

<https://www.indeed.com/viewjob?from=appshareios&jk=35da45d385990d4f>

Very little of this work serves the Citizens of Sebastopol. It seems we are paying for a staff person for West County Community Services.

In addition, a recent interview with Jennifer Lake, which says she's leaving the position, says she works with about 24 individuals: "About 24 of them. And the 24 doesn't mean that I'm intensively working with them. I serve one or two people at a time in terms of longer term solutions. And it depends on who's willing, because

they're not all willing to, they're all on. There's a continuum of where they're at, where the mindset is.

It's just worked out that I'm usually helping one or two people in a more intense way, like giving them rides to social services or giving them rides to Social Security office, or helping with applications for financial assistance or food assistance or brainstorming where they can live or what their barrier, if they have a barrier, say they have, they need some mental health treatment or they need to get connected to medical or mental health.”

While I think this a valuable position, I do not understand why the Citizens of Sebastopol are funding it. I also don't understand how Council could fund it when it seems that Jennifer Lake is leaving the position, which means a new hire won't have her experience and we will be paying for training another person who will service 24 individuals while we are a population of 7500 in need in funding for basic services like Fire, Police, Parks, Public Works, Roads and Water Systems.

If Council wants to retain this position, work with the County to fund it. The County just gave over \$330,000 to fund Horizon's Shine for six months, they should also fund this position.

We are at a critical moment in Sebastopol. We are nearing the edge of our financial reserves. We have businesses closing on Main Street (Gypsy Café and Boho Bungalow). We have a huge amount of commercial vacancy. We are dependent on sales tax to run our City; the more businesses that we lose, the more our City is underfunded.

I ask this Council, as they appoint new members to the Budget Committee and look at our finances, to please do their work and their sworn duty to advocate for the Citizens of Sebastopol and our small business community and direct our tiny

budget to services which all residents and businesses utilize such as City Staffing, Fire, Police, Public Spaces, Parks, Roads and Water.

Our City needs to have its basic services funded. They have been underfunded for many years, which has resulted in a backlog of need from staffing to road repair to maintenance of public parks. Ives' Park is not ADA compliant and a woman reported to Council that her elderly relative fell and broke her arm. The City has an obligation to make our parks ADA complaint and safe for citizens and visitors. It's unacceptable that Council has not made Ives a priority as it is our central downtown park and associated with Ives Pool and the Arts Center.

Best,

Kate Hag